DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 388 661 SP 036 309

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TITLE Teacher Attitudes on Portfolio Assessment, Implementation, and Practicability.
PUB DATE [95]
NOTE 17p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; *Classroom Techniques; Elementary Secondary Education; *Evaluation Methods; Higher Education; Informal Assessment; *Portfolio Assessment; Portfolios (Background Materials); *Student Evaluation; Student Records; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS *Teacher Knowledge

ABSTRACT

This study consisted of a survey of 31 professional educators to determine their knowledge and attitudes concerning the use of portfolios as an assessment tool. Of the 31 surveys that were mailed to the subjects, 29 were returned, with a response rate of 94 percent. Out of the 29 professionals that were surveyed, only six had implemented the use of portfolio assessment. Among respondents, 52 percent felt they had not received adequate training in portfolio use, 88 percent favored the use of portfolios, and most respondents identified practical problems with portfolio use including inadequate training and time management. The survey findings suggest that teachers see portfolios as an effective means of addressing students' progress, strengths, and weaknesses, but that increased training is needed. The survey instrument is appended. (ND)

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Running head: TEACHER ATTITUDES ON PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

# Teacher Attitudes on Portfolio Assessment, Implementation, and Practicability

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Abstract

This study consisted of a survey of thirty-one professional educators to determine their knowledge and attitude concerning the use of portfolios as an assessment tool. Of the thirty-one surveys (SA, A, D, SD Likert scale based upon twelve questions) that were mailed to the subjects, twenty-nine were returned, with a response rate of 94%. Out of the twenty-nine professionals that were surveyed, only six have implemented the use of portfolios within their classroom. Overwhelming percentages regarding practical problems with portfolio use tended to center around inadequate training, and the management and organization of portfolios ranked as the most serious concerns in the surveys. In conclusion, our survey suggests that portfolios are an effective means of addressing students' progress, strengths and weaknesses. Teachers' attitudes indicate that they are receptive to the usage and implementation of portfolios.

# Teacher Attitudes of Portfolio Assessment, Implementation and Practicability

## Purpose

The major purpose of this study was to determine teacher knowledge and attitudes concerning portfolio assessment.

## Rationale of the Study

Because of the growing speculation of current assessment procedures and state mandated proficiencies, educators are exploring avenues which focus on students' strengths, progress made, and deficient areas. There is much information on the philosophical base, methodologies, and contents of a portfolio, but there is very little research on the reactions and feelings of those who plan to implement portfolios. As many colleges begin to stress the importance of portfolios as an entrance requirement for admittance to Universities, educators need to shift their focus to alternative forms of assessment which reflect authentic student works. This will enable the universities to see the actual growth and progression of education.

## Previous Research in the Area

How Professionals View Portfolio Assessment. Jerry Johns and Peggy Van Leirsburg (1992) conducted a follow-up study to target concerns of two teacher populations, those who have implemented portfolios and those who have not implemented portfolios. Among both groups the greatest concerns evolve around planning, managing the contents of the portfolio, time management, use of portfolios in parent/teacher conferences, and criteria for evaluation procedures of portfolios. Those teachers who had gone through portfolio training and also had implemented their use in the classroom tended to be more favorable toward portfolios as an assessment

tool in comparison to the group that had not received training. The overwhelming majority of teachers currently using portfolios were those who have received training in regard to portfolios.

Analysis of an Early Literacy Portfolio: Consequences for Instruction.

Portfolios vary "across locations, but the central purposes seem constant: to support instruction and to bring assessment methods into line with curriculum" (Salinger and Chittenden, 1994, p. 446). The aforementioned researchers interviewed teachers of the South Brunswick Schools in New Jersey. After a year's experience in developing and implementing the Early Literacy Portfolio project, the researchers conducted a study to determine what issues were of importance. The management of portfolios was a concern raised in every interview with a range of intensity. Teachers felt that portfolios were a very worthwhile experience for students and a non-threatening mode of testing children. One-third of the teachers reported that time management was of a major concern. Training was also noted as of major importance both in initial learning experience as well as a means to increase one's knowledge base. It was suggested that training take place early in the school year and that a network of teachers should be established to provide support.

Summary of Previous Research

Previous research indicates that teachers are generally positive toward the outcomes derived from portfolios, although; major concerns deal with inadequate teacher training and difficulties in content and time management.

Major Questions and Definitions

Research questions. This research was an attempt to answer three central questions.

1.) Do teachers feel they have adequate training to implement portfolios as an assessment tool?

2.) Do teachers favorably respond to portfolios?

3.) Do teachers feel one of the major obstacles in implementing portfolios is due to lack of adequate time?

Definitions.

A portfolio is a folder of selected assessment records collected over time to document a child's competencies, progress, etc. Often a portfolio contains an assortment of documentation such as observational records, dated developmental benchmarks, dated work samples, anecdotal records, photographs, and audio or video tapes. Students generally share in the selecting and reflect on their decisions (Ulrey, 1994). According to Constance Weaver, (Weaver, 1994, p. 218) portfolios are assessment tools which reflect the uniqueness of an individual student with emphasis on strengths and growth made. Portfolios are concerned with process and perceptions rather than strictly products of learning. Portfolios include reflection and self evaluation of student works. Portfolios need to contain authentic works. Authentic work is not controlled by the teacher, but rather a creative piece of material produced solely by the student (e.g. plays, poetry, maps, letters, drawings, hypotheses of experiments, stories, audio tapes, invitations, menus, geometric designs, explanation of mathematical processes, reading logs, journal entries, self reflections and evaluations, parent evaluations, and teacher/student conferences). Authentic

assessment is the gathering of real information about a child in order to understand where he/she is in his/her own development and reflects the actual learning experience (Ulrey, 1994).

## Method

### Subjects

Surveys were sent to thirty-one participants which targeted their attitudes and perceptions concerning portfolio assessment. Of the thirty-one that were sent out, 29 were returned with a 94% response rate. The participants ranged from kindergarten teachers through college personnel, including school administrators.

### Measures

Indicators of attitude. The major indicator of teacher attitude toward portfolio assessment was an 18 item questionnaire constructed by the authors (see the Appendix for a copy of this questionnaire). The first three questions asked the teachers to report their years of teaching experience, the grade level they are currently teaching, and the highest level of education received. The next 12 questions were four Likert -scored (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) subscales. Each of these subscales focused upon teacher attitudes and perceptions concerning portfolio assessment. The remaining three questions asked teachers to report in what areas they would implement portfolios, whether or not they are currently using portfolios in their classroom, and if they are not, the number one reason deterring them from implementing them into their classroom.

### Procedure

The authors met to create a questionnaire that addressed the different attitudes toward portfolios as an assessment tool. The questionnaires were

sent to participants and returned anonymously. When creating the questionnaire we addressed the issues of demographics, 12 questions on a four point Likert scale which reflected their perceptions and attitudes of portfolio implementation, as well as a section dealing with major concerns of portfolios. When all the questionnaires were returned, responses were tallied to determine percentage points for each Likert subscale. Higher percentages skewed toward the strongly agree/ agree range of the scale would suggest a more positive attitude toward portfolio assessment, implementation and practicability.

## Results

Three questions formed the basis of this study: 1) Do teachers feel they have adequate training to implement portfolios; 2) Do teachers favorably respond to portfolios; 3) Do teachers feel one of the major obstacles in implementing portfolios is due to lack of adequate time? Our first research question is supported by question five on the original questionnaire. The percentages demonstrate that 48% of the sampling felt they have received adequate training and 52% felt they have not received enough training. Question 2 deals with the issue of teachers feeling favorably toward the use of portfolios. This question is addressed by questions 1-3, 6-8, 10, and 11. The results suggest that 88% of the respondents favored the use of portfolios. When looking at our final question, "What is the main obstacle when working with portfolios," 53% of the respondents indicated that inadequate levels of training prevented them from implementing portfolios. In addition, 31% stated that time management affected their attitude toward the use of portfolios, while 9% cited the following issues as main contributors for not implementing portfolios in the classroom: unsure of criteria used to evaluate portfolio

contents, not recognized by administration as the preferred method of assessment, and inconsistent intervals of employment. For the remaining 7% of our sampling population, this question was irrelevant as they have already implemented portfolios in the classroom. Based upon the twelve Likert subscales, a table showing percentages of responses to each item was created. The data in Table 1 demonstrates the responses for each item on the questionnaire.

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Place Table 1 about here

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Table 2 reflects the degree the educators would use portfolios as an assessment tool in their classroom. Eighty-three percent stated they would use them across the curriculum. Eight percent stated they would use portfolios only in the Language Arts, 3% would only use portfolios in Math, and 3% would use portfolios in both the Language Arts and Math. Specific content areas for inclusion are shown in table 2.

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Place Table 2 about here

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## Discussion

Research Question 1. Do teachers feel they have adequate training to implement portfolios as an assessment tool? Salinger and Chittenden's (1994) research with the South Brunswick Schools, which stated that training was a crucial element in effective implementation of portfolios, is consistent with the results of our study which conveyed 48% of the teacher polled felt they had adequate training.

Research Question 2. Do teachers favorably respond to portfolios? There was no current research available to us that categorizes those teachers who are favorable or unfavorable regarding portfolios, however; our research is indicative of favorable perceptions towards portfolios, with an overwhelming 88% of the respondents suggesting a positive attitude.

Research Question 3. Do teachers feel one of the major obstacles in implementing portfolios is due to lack of adequate time? The research conducted by Johns and Van Leirsburg (1992), found a major concern of practicing educators in the area of portfolio assessment was related to time management. Furthermore, Salinger and Chittenden's (1994) research concludes that time management was an issue for one-third of the teachers. Likewise, our study was consistent with the aforementioned studies in that 31% of our participants mentioned that time management was a major deterrent in implementing portfolios.

Conclusion. Used as an assessment tool, portfolios are collections by students and teachers that reflect effort, progress, processes, and achievements made by the student which fosters individual differences and learning styles which formal testing does not account for. The issue of teacher training presents challenges to the effective and widespread use of portfolios. Philosophically, educators tend to agree with the basis upon which portfolio assessment is designed. Perhaps increased knowledge and training concerning portfolios will help portfolio assessment receive global recognition and accreditation and will eventually replace traditional forms of assessment and grading as classrooms reflect assessment that is based upon the process of learning, rather than the product.

## References

Johns, Jerry, & Van Leirsburg, Peggy. (1992). How Professionals View Portfolio Assessment. Reading Research and Instruction, 32, 1-10.

Salinger, Terry, & Chittenden, Edward. (1994). Analysis of an Early Literacy Portfolio: Consequences for Instruction. Language Arts, 71, 446-452.

Ulrey, Dave, & Ulrey, Jan. (1994). Authentic Assessment in the Multiage Classroom. Del Mar, CA: California State Department of Education.

Weaver, Constance. (1994). Reading Process and Practice. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Table 1

Teacher Agreement Regarding Portfolio Assessment

| Question | SA | A | D | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % of Agreement | | | |
| 1. I would find portfolios to be a source of information when previewing folders of incoming students. | 62% | 38% | 0% | 0% |
| 2. Portfolios should replace grade cards. | 10% | 21% | 62% | 7% |
| 3. Portfolios are accurate representations of student work. | 28% | 65% | 7% | 0% |
| 4. I feel I could implement Portfolios in my classroom with ease. | 28% | 34% | 38% | 0% |
| 5. I have adequate training which will enable me to implement portfolio assessment in my classroom with ease | 3% | 45% | 45% | 7% |
| 6. I would use portfolios, regardless whether or not subsequent teachers implemented them in their own rooms. | 28% | 55% | 17% | 0% |
| 7. Portfolios convey concrete strengths and weaknesses to subsequent teachers. | 24% | 69% | 7% | 0% |
| 8. Portfolios would be helpful to me when addressing student progress, strengths, and weaknesses to parents. | 34% | 66% | 0% | 0% |
| 9. Portfolios should only count as a portion of the student's overall grade | 14% | 69% | 14% | 3% |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10. Portfolios foster positive communication between the home and school. | 41% | 52% | 7% | 0% |
| 11. Portfolios build self esteem for students. | 38% | 59% | 3% | 0% |
| 12. I would use portfolios, but I would use traditional sources of information. | 21% | 52% | 21% | 6% |

Table 2

| Degree of Use | % of Usage |
|---|---|
| Not at all | 0% |
| Language Arts | 8% |
| Science | 0% |
| Social Studies | 0% |
| Health | 0% |
| Math | 3% |
| Language Arts/Math | 3% |
| Aeross the Curriculum | 86% |
| **Reasons not Used** | **Percentage rate** |
| Adequate training | 53% |
| Time Management | 31% |
| Unsure of Criteria to use to evaluate | 3% |
| Not recognized by administration as preferred method of assessment | 3% |
| Not a daily teacher | 7% |
| **Currently using portfolios** | |
| yes | 9 |
| no | 20 |
| Total sampling | 29 |

## Appendix

Please circle the item which best describes your teaching background

Grade level currently teaching K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Special Services

Area taught rural urban suburban

Level of Education Bachelor's B.S.+10 B.S.+20 B.S.+30
Master's M.A.+20 M.A.+40 (or more)

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Circle the code which best describes your feelings for each item.

SA=Strongly Agree A=Agree D=Disagree SD=Strongly Disagree

1. I would find portfolios to be a beneficial source of information when previewing folders of incoming students. SA A D SD

2. Portfolios should replace grade cards. SA A D SD

3. Portfolios are accurate representations of student work. SA A D SD

4. I feel I could implement portfolios in my classroom with ease. SA A D SD

5. I have adequate training which will enable me to implement portfolio assessment in my classroom with ease. SA A D SD

6. I would use portfolios, regardless of whether or not subsequent teachers implemented them in their own classrooms. SA A D SD

7. Portfolios convey concrete strengths and weaknesses to subsequent teachers. SA A D SD

8. Portfolios would be helpful to me when addressing student progress, strengths, and weaknesses to parents. SA A D SD

9. Portfolios should only count as a portion of the student's overall grade. SA A D SD

10. Portfolios foster positive communication between the home and school. SA A D SD

11. Portfolios build self esteem for students. SA A D SD

12. I would use portfolios, but I would use traditional sources of information (tests, projects, homework,.....) to assign grades. SA A D SD

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Circle the response which best describes your feelings on each item about portfolio assessment.

1. Given an ideal situation, to what degree would you use portfolio assessment in your classroom?

Not at all Only in Language Arts. Only in Science/S.S./Health/Math
Across the curriculum Other_____

2. I am currently using portfolio assessment in my classroom. Yes No

3. If you do not currently use portfolios as an assessment tool. the #1 reason you do not is because....

_____there has not been enough training in the area.

_____it is not time efficient.

_____philosophically, I disagree with using portfolios as an assessment tool.

_____other

_____

## Introduction

This brochure describes how to submit documents to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) and is intended to solicit such submissions from individuals and organizations.

Provided, in sequence, are: (1) a brief description of the ERIC system; (2) a list of the many advantages of having a document accepted by ERIC; (3) information on the kinds of documents ERIC is seeking; (4) an outline of the selection criteria that are applied to incoming documents; and (5) where to send the documents so that they will receive proper consideration.

The ERIC system and its abstract journal *Resources in Education (RIE)* are dependent on the flow of education related documents from authors and institutions to its Clearinghouses and other facilities. Only through the cooperation of document generators and producers can ERIC achieve its goal of comprehensive bibliographic coverage of the literature of education in the United States.

## ERIC: a Brief Description

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a decentralized nationwide network, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, and designed to collect educational documents and to make them available to teachers, administrators, researchers, students, and other interested persons. ERIC publishes a monthly abstract journal, *Resources in Education (RIE)*, which announces all documents that are acquired by ERIC and that pass its selection criteria. ERIC attempts comprehensive coverage of recently completed significant documents dealing with education.

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ERIC accomplishes its objectives primarily through its sixteen subject-oriented Clearinghouses (located at non-profit institutions) and four commercial organizations. The addresses of these ERIC components appear at the end of this brochure.

## Advantages of Having a Document in ERIC

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- Program/Project Descriptions
- Opinion Papers, Essays, Position Papers
- Monographs, Treatises
- Speeches and Presentations
- Evaluation Studies
- Feasibility Studies
- State of the Art Studies
- Instructional Materials
- Syllabi
- Teaching Guides
- Resource Guides
- Manuals
- Handbooks
- Curriculum Materials
- Conference Papers
- Bibliographies, Annotated Bibliographies
- Legislation and Regulations
- Tests, Questionnaires, Measurement Devices
- Vocabularies, Dictionaries, Glossaries, Thesauri
- Statistical Compilations
- Taxonomies and Classifications
- Dissertations

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